

CASTORIA

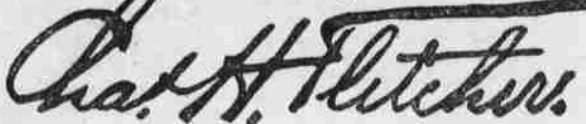
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I forgot my Rocky Mountain Tea last night.
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An Appeal By Proxy.

The recent discussion in the public prints of the character of the guards and other employees of the State Penitentiary, and the manner in which their appointments are brought about, even should it lead to civil service methods for securing employees in the Penitentiary, would fall in its purpose, should it not lead to a much wider inquiry and a much more drastic reform in the modes of providing officers and their assistants for most of our state institutions. To say that the guards and other employees of the Penitentiary were given their places, not because of any especial fitness for those places, but because some friend of the appointee had a "pull" with the appointing power, is to state nothing new. To say that the evil would be cured by appointing half the employees from one political party, and half from a different party, would be to say what no one who is familiar with political place-hunters believe.

It may be laid down as an axiom that will readily be admitted by the American public, except that portion of it included in the class referred to, that the worst possible appointment to any office of trust or emolument whatsoever, is, as a rule, the place-seeker, the place-hunter, the would-be feeder at the public crib, whose eye and appetite, and ardent longing of the soul are fixed, primarily and chiefly, on the salary and emoluments of some public office, great or small, and only incidentally upon the duties that it may devolve on him to discharge. And yet in the downward move of our politics, national, state, and municipal, this is the very class from which the far largest part of the appointments are made by elective officers to the subordinate positions over which they have control. The postulate of the Fathers of the Republic, that only those should be placed in office who possessed some special fitness for it, has been brushed aside, and its place has been substituted by the endorsement of some "party-leader" to the effect that Smith is a good party worker, and (in parenthesis) as he has never been fit for anything else it would be a good thing to try him in an office and see if he could not at least draw the salary attached to the same.

This criterion of measuring the fitness of possible public servants, is not confined to any one section of our country, nor to any particular political party. It might fitly be termed a national disease, poisoning the blood of the body politic, and attesting its presence by hideous eruptions in Pennsylvania as well as Missouri, in Texas as consistently as in Ohio. Nor is the remedy to be wrought by or through the action of any particular party. Party workers, as a rule, are of the same general characteristics, whatever their party affiliations. Any species of reform, receives from a party worker, only that measure of approval and support that consists with fealty to his party, and himself, and whenever reform appears likely to collide with party and self, the party worker deserts Reform and drops into the procession that follows the lead of party. The inauguration and successful completion of any measure intended to remedy public abuses necessarily calls for a high order of conscientiousness, a thorough knowledge of the end to be compassed, indomitable courage in meeting and overcoming opposition, and an inexhaustible fund of patience in waiting until the public attention be gained and the public conscience aroused. Party organization on the other hand, demands only a leader with a loud voice who leads his followers in shouting, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" Which can muster the most followers and make the loudest noise is declared Victor, and entitled to the offices and their emoluments—the main thing after all.

The public school system was not wrested from the foul grasp of spoils in the City of St. Louis, and committed to the keeping of a body of intelligent and public spirited professional and business men, through party organization, but through the mighty stirring of the public conscience, which, when fully aroused, spoke through party councils, dictating, not sup-

plicating, for fit men to handle the revenues and administer the affairs of the public schools of the city.

Is the conscience, the intelligence, the moral courage of the people of Missouri, equal to another reform analogous to that accomplished by the citizens of St. Louis in their school affairs, only wider in its range, deeper in its reach, concerned with a class vastly more entitled to public sympathy than those who were benefitted by the reform of the Public School Board? If so, then there is good cause for the exercise of heart, brain, and moral force, in another reform, in behalf of a class that appeals most strongly to human sympathy, and that should not appeal in vain.

For years in this state, and the same is true in Illinois, possibly a little more offensively true in that state than in this, with every incoming administration, there has been a clean sweep of functionaries in every state institution from superintendent to scullion, not on account of a change in the political character of the state administration, but simply to make places for the personal friends, followers, and henchmen of the latest incumbent of the gubernatorial office. Some years ago, the writer, at the request of a friend, inquired of a recently elected governor as to the chance for the friend's appointment to a modest position in a large state institution. The reply was that this special position had been promised a friend of the gubernatorial candidate the summer previous, when the campaign was hot, as well as the weather, and when plums could be shaken from the political tree by the wise ones, as well as from the tree of the rural voter.

Possibly the evils of a system of appointments, based, not on the fitness of the appointee, but on his claim to a reward for having been a personal and political favorite of the appointing power, are seen less glaringly in the employees of the state prison than in any other state institution. To stand guard over a number of convicts, shotgun in hand, requires no very high degree of intelligence, conscientiousness, or fineness of nature. It might interfere very seriously with good discipline should a warden attempt to secure better service from a number of employees who were fully aware of the fact that their appointments were made only nominally by the warden, the real appointing power being Governor Jones, or Senator This, or Representative That, as a reward for meritorious conduct in the struggle for office known as the campaign of eighteen hundred and something. But the evil of this method of making appointments is infinitesimal as seen in the penitentiary, compared with the direful results that follow through the appointment of unfit persons to control absolutely the persons and conduct of a thousand and helpless people, such as are found in our hospitals for the insane; mentally unbalanced, incapable of protecting themselves, and utterly at the mercy of the superintendent and his assistants by night as well as by day. Grant that the head of the institution has been selected for his position on account of his eminent fitness for the place; that he is an alienist of high repute, humane, considerate, desirous of aiding to the utmost the restoration of his patients to mental health, or at least of ameliorating as far as possible their unfortunate condition, yet is obliged to enroll in his corps of assistants only such specimens as are thrust upon him from without by politicians claiming appointments of their favorites as a reward for party service, and it is easily seen at what a disadvantage the superintendent is placed in attempting to conduct the institution upon any ideal plan. Concede on the other hand, that the superintendent, instead of being a humane and skilled physician, of high and honorable character, should be a coarse, self-indulgent brute, as some have proved to be, then where is the safe-guard for the innocent, the helpless, the unprotected—a thousand sheep safe folded, officered by a corps of male and female wolves! Into these homes for the insane have gone, not the coarsest and most degraded always, from the lowest social strata of society, but often

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those of the finest and most spiritual organism, male or female. Perhaps a Hamlet, with reason overthrown in the vain attempt to reconcile the native instincts of the human heart with the divine injunction, "Thou shalt not kill." A Missouri Ophelia, whose young life bears the blight of unrequited love, may be guarded through the watches of the night by some play-thing of a politician whom he has tired of, and flung into that good opening as a means of ridding himself of her.

What soul would not revolt at the thought of a broken, high-souled man, a refined, sensitive, modest woman, exiled from the protection and loving sympathy of home, for a while, falling into the power of coarse, unfeeling, perhaps immoral custodians, appointed to their positions because they had a political pull, and not through any fitness duly ascertained by any rational method of examination? To suggest the thought is sufficient to secure the hearty approval of all right-thinking people for the abolition of a system where such things could even be possible.

The present is a favorable time for the reformation of our existing system. Party spirit, or at least the domagoc spirit that often inspires party action, is at a low ebb. The executive offices and legislature are nearly equally divided between members of the Democratic and Republican parties.

I ask Governor Folk to recall in this connection, the sight that may still be witnessed in his native state, from the portico of the University of which both he and the writer were graduates, and contrast the suggestion of the state of things in our adopted state of which he is now the chief executive. In site of Vanderbilt University in the suburbs of Nashville, stands a state institution for the insane, a picture of peaceful repose, with its beautiful grounds adorned with flowers and shrubs, symbolizing the conditions that prevail within the building itself. Within presided as superintendent for many years, a professional gentleman who had been selected for that delicate and responsible position because of his peculiar fitness for it, in the possession of scientific attainments, a humane and kindly nature, and high administrative qualities, not because he was a political worker, or the friend of some Governor with offices to bestow as a proof of his friendly feelings. This superintendent selected his own assistants, and discharged them when he found them incompetent. What the law may be as to his tenure of office, I do not know, but I know this man held this office while many Governors came and went through the white house on the hill, and no one disturbed

the head of the home for the insane, and no one thought of turning him out to make place for another. So he had time to lay broad and deep his plans for the betterment of the institution under his care, and to become wiser and wiser in his treatment of the unfortunates who became the beneficiaries of his professional skill. He had time and the fitness for it, to gather together and train for effective work a corps of assistants, to weed out the inefficient, to reduce friction, to secure, in brief, a well-balanced, well-regulated machine, dominated by the noblest human impulses, and moving on noiseless axles toward one end, and one only—the cure when possible, of the unfortunate human beings entrusted to the care of the state; or if that were impossible, then the amelioration of their pitiable condition as far as could be done. Now, contrast this ideal organization and management, sheltered from partisan or factional strife through a long period of time, attention concentrated only on the duties that each is concerned with, with that of an institution officered by appointees whose places are secured through political favoritism, whose attention is divided, for their brief period of service, between the desire to serve the political machine of which they form a part, and a sense of duty towards the helpless committed to their care. At the end of four years' term, in our state, having received their due reward for personal and political fidelity, the employees are swept by a new political broom, and a new procession files in, raw, inexperienced, untrained, to linger four years, perhaps learn the alphabet of their duties, draw their salaries with commendable punctuality, and, follow on in the paths of their predecessors.

Now, all the state institutions should be "taken out of politics." No one except a machine politician will maintain the contrary. Of all the state institutions, those for sheltering the insane appeal most loudly for reform. If the merits of the case could be fully presented to the intelligence and conscience of the people of Missouri, a reform would surely follow. Governor Folk might inaugurate such a reform, but only the people can perpetuate it. The local and state medical associations can form public opinion on this subject and point the way to reform. Will they do it? From the quiet chambers of 7000 inmates of our state hospitals for the insane, whose lives are shadowed by the greatest affliction that falls upon humanity, comes the echo of this query: "Will they do it?"

The writer believes that this subject is worthy the attention of the Governor of the state, of the medical and charitable associations of the state, of the pulpit

and the press, and of the entire body of our citizens; that inquiry should be made into the mode of making and changing appointees in our state hospitals for the insane, and that if rigid and thorough examination be made, there would be a demand from the people for immediate and drastic reform of the existing system.

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